

January-March 2007

Los Angeles County Mental Health Magazine

# Minds & Matters

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## Message from the Director

If I were to use one word to describe this past year, it would be resiliency. Why, that word? Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adversity, and we have overwhelmingly done that this fiscal year.

The first test of our resilience is the urgency and complexity of implementing Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). We are working hard to make sure that the principles of the MHSA are put into practice. The funding brought new challenges and expectations to our department and tested our staff, community stakeholders, and County leadership. We were able to develop and issue more than 10 Requests for Services, a record number for a Department that had issued fewer than three in the past decade.

If it were not for the on going commitment and dedication of our staff and community partners, we would not be enjoying our current forward momentum.

Secondly, we faced a paradox of circumstances involving our non-MHSA and MHSA budgets. While the Department received an influx of MHSA dollars, we faced a structural deficit because of the flat funding for our indigent services. However, we used this paradox to help us transform to recovery-oriented services. Without the capacity to bounce back from this, we might have been unable to forge ahead.

Our third challenge is to find new and improved information technology solutions for our ever-growing data collection need. Presently, we conduct our business in a fairly unsophisticated way that is time consuming and presents storage challenges. We began implementing a new information system that will eventually be paperless. This year the Department introduced the Integrated Behavioral Health Information System (IBHIS), the future of the health billing system. We are still a couple of years away from actually having a paperless system, but we will turn this concept into a reality.

Finally, the Department launched a new internet web site that is more user friendly to our staff, providers, clients, consumers and collaborative partners. The new internet web site address is <http://dmh.lacounty.gov>. Our old internet web site was outdated and deemed too complex as it had 32 references listed on the home page. The new internet web site has streamlined the 32 references into five categories ("Home," "About Us," "Services," "News & Resources," and "Provider Tools").

I hope that as you read about our programs' and centers' successes and accomplishments, you are reminded of what an extraordinary, dedicated, and talented staff we have.

Sincerely,

Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.  
Director of Mental Health



# Employee Recognition News & Notes

## Retirements

### Names & Years of County Service

#### July 2006

Annette H. Truss  
(26 years)

#### August 2006

Ellen R. Stallworth  
(35 years)

Ernest Dunn  
(7 years)

Jose A. Perez  
(7 years)

Elinor Weissman  
(4 years)

#### October 2006

Anthony Avila  
(30 years)

#### November 2006

Sherry Hunter  
(36 years)

Mercey C. Sanchez  
(34 years)

#### December 2006

Alice F. Davis  
(32 years)

Mary B. Fulton  
(38 years)

Christell Hicks  
(34 years)

Source: Kimberly Snell  
Human Resources Bureau

## DMH & DCFS RECIPIENTS OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES AWARD FOR D-RATE PROGRAM

**L**os Angeles County Department of Mental Health, in collaboration with the Department of Children and Family Services, were recipients of the 2006 National Association of Counties (NACo) Award for the D-Rate Program. The national honor recognizes programs for its innovation that contribute to and enhance county government in the United States.

In addition, the Department had two programs honored at the County's Productivity & Quality Awards Ceremony held on October 25, 2006. The Emergency Outreach Bureau and Sheriff's MTA Crisis Response Unit were awarded the Million Dollar Club (presented to programs who have reported savings, cost avoidance and/or revenue in excess of \$1 million) and Traditional Plaque Award (recognizes commendable achievement in public service). A Certificate of Recognition was awarded to the Homeward: Escorted Patient Transport.

Source: Vicki Pierce, Employee Recognition Coordinator (213) 738-3089



Brian Adair, Psychiatric Social Worker was presented a County scroll by Fourth District Deputy Nick Ippolito



Irma Castaneda, Tony Beliz, Deputy McClelland, Susan Newberry and Linda Boyd were winners at County's 20th Annual Productivity & Quality Awards Ceremony on October 25, 2006

## NAMI CALIF. HONORS ALISA DUNN

**T**he Board of Directors of the National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI) California honored Dunn, L.C.S.W., Program Manager of the Mental Health Court Program as part of the "2006 Mental Illness Awareness Week Thank You Campaign." This honor is in appreciation for all the extra efforts, hard work and support Alisa Dunn has provided to consumers, their families, and the NAMI community over the past year.



Barbara Massey was featured on KABC Talk Radio "Spotlight in the Community" on January 7, 2007

**K**udos to Dr. Verda Bradley for successfully graduating the ninth annual group of Co-Occurring Disorder (COD) Peer Advocates this past spring. Many people know that Dr. Bradley retired from an outstanding career with our department. She put focus on the contribution of substance abuse to mental illness and the need to closely work with the substance abuse treatment community. Among her many contributions, one of the lasting significance is the creation of the COD Peer Advocates Program with Dr. Jocelyn Whiten. This program graduates some 15 COD Peer Advocates each year. These are consumers who are specially trained during a highly structured multi-week course to help other consumers. The program includes a rigorous curriculum that combines didactic instruction with hands-on-experience. Our department has plans to hire many peer advocates in the near future, and we are looking for ways to train and define them. Dr. Bradley's innovative program has not only provided a model for that training but has also provided an impressive support group for graduates that transcends years. Many graduates have gone on to become key employees throughout our clinical organization.

Source: Dr. Roderick Shaner, Medical Director

**In My Own  
Words:**

# **Resiliency, Hope, Wellness & Recovery**

**Written by**

**Stephen Rivera  
MHSA Mental  
Health Peer  
Advocate**

**Photographs by  
Ken Kondo**





**W**hen talking about resiliency and the potential that the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) holds for the mentally ill in Los Angeles County, I am living proof that hope, wellness and recovery can become a reality.

For many years I struggled with my mental illness (diagnosis of schizophrenia and dual diagnosis of alcohol abuse later in life), growing up in a Latino culture that did not understand what I was going through. To them, I was “loco” or crazy. By age 17, I was committed to the State Hospital and released three years later back to my family who was unprepared for my return home. As the frustrations grew on both mine and my family’s part, I left my family home and moved to downtown Los Angeles Skid Row area.

I can remember my first week living on Skid Row as there were a lot of people who were in similar conditions as I was in, being mentally ill. They had all of their lifelong belongings in shopping carts and/or milk crates. They had no one to answer or listen to. Finally, I was by myself, a loner, but I was homeless, hungry and cold. My first priority was to survive. I walked down the streets looking for any food lines and shelters to sleep in. The elements that plagued Skid Row were there too; people dealing drugs and alcohol to anyone who wanted them. There were times when the shelters were so full I had to sleep on the sidewalks using cardboard boxes for cover and newspapers as insulation from the wet and cold concrete. With no family or friends, the holidays were very depressing as painful memories filled me. To relieve the pain, I began to drink alcohol. It did not matter what proof the bottle was as I would drink it to the bitter end. I hit rock bottom, and I felt there was no way out.

I lived on streets, shelters, empty railroad cars, and doorways, eating anything people left behind. Finally after 20 years of living in misery I decided to transform my life and ask for help. It was the first time in my life I did this. I walked over to the L.A. Mission and spoke to a doctor who then referred me to the Downtown Mental Health Center (DMHC). Entering the Center, I was scared and

uncertain about how they would treat me. In time I became comfortable with the staff and began to attend therapy and dual diagnosis group sessions. The staff moved me to another group, the Community Living Program. While in the program, I received a “Section 8” voucher that allowed me to move into my first apartment.

As part of my recovery plan, I was encouraged by the DMHC staff to reunite with my family. It was difficult as my parents were angry with me for leaving without saying goodbye, but we came to an area of understanding and peace. Now, I talk to my family on the telephone and see them during the holidays, something I had yearned for while living on Skid Row.

Feeling better about myself and the direction my life was heading, I became a member of “Project Return: The Next Step,” an organization operated by former mental health clients. The organization’s mission is to provide social opportunities, promote wellness, personal growth, build self-esteem, as well as community involvement through self-help and peer support that encourages and empower leadership. “Project Return: The Next Step’s” motto is Taking Charge Together. While at the organization, I worked as Club & Regional Aide and Coordinator for the IMD Hospitals.

I wanted to do more and help others toward recovery. My wish was granted when I joined a group of former mental health clients and consumers as part of a Japanese-American Consumer Exchange Program. Since 2002, I have traveled to Japan and shared my experiences of recovery and love for the arts with Japanese clients, consumers, and mental health and medical professionals. Hopefully they will be able to overcome the cultural stigma associated with mental illness and eventually participate in their community. Sadly, the mentally ill live on the river banks outside of the big cities.

Last month (December 2006), another one of my goals became a reality when I was transferred as a MHSA Mental Health Peer Advocate to the Downtown Mental Health Center where my road to recovery began.

On my first day at the Center, I felt the same way that I did when I entered through the doors 20 years ago—scared and uncertain. This time, how would the staff treat me as a former client of theirs? The staff welcomed me with open arms because they saw me as their child who grew up, graduated and came back home to help the other clients and consumers get back on the road to recovery. One of my former therapy group members said, “We are all proud of you, Stephen...You give us hope that we are all searching for here on Skid Row.”

To me, recovery is real and a reachable goal for people with mental illness. Peer-to-peer support is a vital part of the recovery process because it helps build the natural foundation for support. I know, I am living proof of that.

## 2005-2006

## DMH YEAR IN REVIEW

## Major Accomplishments

Implemented Phase I of the Countywide Enhanced Specialized Foster Care Mental Health Services Plan. To provide a coordinated effort with the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) and various foster care collaborative partners, the Department created the Child Welfare Mental Health Services Division. Mental Health staff from the division have been positioned at seven DCFS offices located in Service Areas 1, 6, and 7. The components of the Plan are also intended to address the County's obligation under the Katie A. Settlement Agreement.

Opened an Urgent Care Center (UCC) at Augustus F. Hawkins Mental Health Center with funding provided through the MHSA Community Services Support (CSS) Plan. The center will provide intensive crisis services, including on-site assessment, intervention, and referrals for co-occurring substance abuse treatment for voluntary and involuntary individuals as well as those who have 72-hour holds who otherwise would have been brought to the Department of Health Services County hospital Psychiatric Emergency Services.

Launched Los Angeles County "Network of Care" web site. The web site offers service directories; resource libraries; legislative; links to other local, state and national web sites; low-cost and private insurance; support and advocacy; and news archive.

Transformed six directly-operated clinics in Arcadia, Compton, Hollywood, San Fernando, South Bay, and West Los Angeles in preparation for the implementation of the MHSA Full Service Partnership Programs.

Increased the community and faith-based organizations participation, especially those who had no previous contact with the Department.

## May



Carmen Gatica Sandate of the Emergency Outreach Bureau was named Los Angeles County Employee of the Month for May.

(Pictured left to right: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Sandate, and Dr. Southard)

Source: CAO 5/06



The Department honored its "Employees of the Year" at a special ceremony at Descano Gardens in La Canada Flintridge on May 23. Honorees include: Anne Barone Award: Service Area 1; Outstanding Program: San Fernando Valley Mental Health Center; Program Support: Annette Haley; Headquarter Support: Surendra Prakash; Service to Consumer: Carmen Gatica Sandate; Supervisor: Julie Leevarinpanich; Manager: Wendi Tovey; DMH Lifetime Achievement: Suzane Wilbur.

Source: Vicki Pierce

## June

More than four hundred, including mental health professionals, police officers, probation officers, and elected official representatives attended the Seventh Annual Law Enforcement & Mental Health Conference held at L.A. County Arboretum on June 16. The conference featured Susan Ko, Ph.D., Director of the Services Systems Core at the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress at UCLA who addressed the topic of suicide among children and adolescents.

Source: San Gabriel Newspapers Group 6/16/06

## August

The Board of Supervisors approved the first allocation of MHSA funds (\$3.32 million) that allowed the Department to expand services at seven directly-operated clinics.

Source: Daily Breeze 8/22/06

## September

L.A. County awarded Outlook Associates \$1.2 million to develop a year-long system implementation and rollout to convert disparate paper-based systems throughout the County's provider network to an integrated and secure HIPAA-compliant electronic medical records system (IBHIS).

"IBHIS gives us the unique opportunity to truly transform the mental health service delivery system," said Robert Greenless, Ph.D., Chief Information Officer of DMH.

Source: PR Newswire 9/6/06

## October



Dr. Suck Won Kim of the University of Minnesota (pictured on the right with Sam Keo) delivered the keynote address at the 12th

Annual Asian American Mental Health Conference "Controlling the Uncontrollable—Impulse Control Behaviors in Asian Americans" in Long Beach on October 13. Other topics included eating disorders (presented by Stephen Cheung of Azusa Pacific University), compulsive and addictive gambling (presented by Dr. Timothy Fong of UCLA), and internet dangers to children and teenagers (presented by Glenn I. Masuda of Pacific Clinics).

Source: Press-Telegram 10/14/06

## November

The Board of Supervisors approved the second allocation of MHSA funds (\$32 million) to 33 community agencies providing services. "With this round, a lot of the funding is for children," said David Sommers of the Fourth District. "This is going to allow the Department to take a very important first step in moving toward a recovery model versus a reactionary model in terms of mental health care services for the citizens of Los Angeles County."

Source: Daily Breeze 11/1/06

## December



Service Area 6, Compton and Northeast Mental Health Centers staff joined Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chief Administrative Officer David Janssen, and Dr. Southard (pictured above) at the L.A. County Homeless Connect Day event held at the Homeless Outreach Program and Integrated Care System in South Los Angeles on December 6. Similar events took place throughout all of the Service Planning Areas in the County.

Source: CAO 12/6/06

# NEWS & NOTES

## SHEILA A. SHIMA APPOINTED TO CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**S**heila A. Shima has been appointed to the position of Chief Deputy Director of the Department of Mental Health, effective January 1, 2007. She replaces Susan Kerr who was named Chief Deputy Director of the County's Department of the Children and Family Services.

Ms. Shima comes to the Department with a wealth of experience in progressively responsible leadership positions in the County of Los Angeles, Chief Administrative Office (CAO).

Prior to her appointment, she served as the Division Chief for the Health and Social Services Teams of the Budget and Operations Management Branch in addition to working in the Intergovernmental Relations Branch of the CAO.

Ms. Shima began her County career with the Department of Mental Health as a Legislative Analyst/Public Information Officer.

## THOMAS & CELIS-KARIM NAMED DEPUTY DIRECTORS

**S**andra D. Thomas, L.C.S.W. and Olivia Celis-Karim, L.C.S.W., MP have been appointed to Deputy Directors. Thomas will oversee the Transition Age Youth Bureau and Celis-Karim will manage the Child & Youth Services Bureau.

A graduate of UCLA, Thomas has been employed by the County for 29 years with approximately 15 of those being in high level management positions. Prior to her appointment, she served as acting Deputy Director providing leadership for the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Transition Age Youth Plan, Juvenile Justice Programs and Child Welfare Division.

For the past three years, Celis-Karim served as a Mental Health District Chief and Director of the Planning Division serving as lead manager for the Department's MHSA activities. Celis-Karim received her Masters in Social Work and Planning from the University of Southern California and Bachelor of Social Work from California State University, Los Angeles.

## UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE

**T**he Compliance Program Office released its first video presentation on Integrity, Ethics and Compliance. Preliminary reports indicated that a number of programs and bureaus have been working diligently to train their staff. "We recognize and appreciate their efforts to aid the Department in achieving one hundred percent compliance," said Robert Levine, MFT. "DMH's teamwork has really been outstanding, especially when we had less than sixty days to complete this enormous task. Kudos to our whole Department!" For more information, contact Robert Levine at (213) 738-2074.

**In Other News:** The Department is making progress towards fulfilling the national requirement for all provider sites and individual providers to have a National Provider Identifier (NPI) by May 23, 2007. Presently, all DMH directly-operated provider sites have a NPI, and more than seven hundred staff have received their individual NPI.

**Quick Reminder:** Each rendering provider, including those unlicensed staff and those licensed staff currently serving as managers need to apply for an individual NPI and submit it to management for inclusion in the updated DMH data base to ensure the Department's continued ability to bill Medicare and Medi-Cal. For more information, contact Judith Weigand, Compliance Officer, at (213) 639-6391.

## SAMHSA LAUNCHES "FRIEND" NATIONAL ANTI-STIGMA AD CAMPAIGN



**T**he U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in partnership with the Ad Council, launched a national awareness public service advertising campaign designed to decrease the negative attitudes that surround mental illness and encourage young adults (18-25) to support their friends who are living with mental illnesses.

Featuring the voice over of Tony-awarding winning actor Liev Schreiber, the campaign includes television, radio, outdoor, print, and interactive elements. Viewers and listeners are encouraged to continue to support their friends who are living with a mental illness, and check out the web site to find out more about what they can do to support their friend's recovery. For more information, go to <http://www.whatadifference.org>.

## 2007 GREATER LOS ANGELES HOMELESS COUNT (JANUARY 23-25)

The Greater L.A. Homeless Count will take place on Tuesday, January 23 (Service Planning Areas 1—Antelope Valley, 2—San Fernando Valley, and 5—West Los Angeles), Wednesday, January 24 (Service Planning Areas 3—San Gabriel Valley, 7—East Los Angeles, and 8—South Bay/Harbor) and Thursday, January 25 (Service Planning Areas 4—Metro Los Angeles and 6—South Los Angeles). For more information about volunteer opportunities and the count, go to <http://homelesscount.lahsa.org>.

## FIFTH ANNUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE (FEBRUARY 15)

The Fifth Annual African American Mental Health Conference "Resilience, Recovery & Reconciliation—Best practices in providing culturally competent mental health services to persons of African heritage" will be held at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Regular registration fee is \$90, which includes continental breakfast, lunch and reception. Registration deadline is February 5. Registration fee is non-refundable. Parking is \$12 (Cherry Street). For more information, contact Rene Woodruff at (323) 298-3671 or Lonetta Richardson Bryan at (213) 351-5347.

## EDMUND D. EDELMAN WESTSIDE MENTAL HEALTH CENTER'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY & OPEN HOUSE (MARCH 1)

The Mental Health Center will celebrate its 10th Anniversary and Open House. To RSVP or for more information, call (310) 966-6541.

## THIRD ANNUAL CALIFORNIA CHILDREN'S GRIEF SYMPOSIUM (MARCH 8)

The Third Annual California Children's Grief Symposium will be held at the Hilton Burbank Airport and Convention Center. Registration fee is \$125, includes continental breakfast and lunch. For more information, contact Chase Child Life Program at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles at (323) 669-2355.

## NINTH ANNUAL COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES MULTICULTURAL CONFERENCE (MAY 16 & 17)

The Ninth Annual County of Los Angeles Multicultural Conference "Continuing the Journey: Adapting to Change in a Culturally Diverse Society" will be held at the Pasadena Convention Center. For more information, contact Mary Norman at (213) 639-6371 or Terry Lewis-Nwachie at (213) 738-4772.

## IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness as the Long Beach Asian Pacific Mental Health Program (LBAPMHP) announced the passing of Boun-Kong Chansamouth of Whittier (July 6, 2006). Chansamouth began his career in 1986 with the Department as a Community Worker assigned to the first clinical team at LBAPMHP serving Laotian, Hmong, and other Southeast Asian clients and consumers. A native of Nam Bak, Laos, Chansamouth had accumulated 20 years of civil service, and in doing so brought honor and credit to himself and comfort to those County residents whose lives he enriched. While we grieve his passing, we were privileged and honored to work with him.

Source: LBAPMHP

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**All submissions are subject to  
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